Excellence in Cities: the Primary Extension

Real stories

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Contents

Introduction and evidence base

1. This report, part of the Ofsted series, *Improving City Schools*, evaluates the impact of the Excellence in Cities (EiC) initiative in primary schools which the government introduced to improve educational achievement and promote social inclusion in disadvantaged areas.

2. Ofsted's report, *Access and achievement in urban education* (1993), showed that, despite an improvement in standards, the gap in attainment between the average performance of all pupils nationally and that of pupils in areas of social disadvantage was widening. The report concluded that 'the rising tide of educational change is not lifting these boats'.

3. The government's 1997 white paper, *Excellence in schools*, set out measures to tackle low attainment and the growing problem of social exclusion. The expansion of the EiC programme into primary schools (the Primary Extension) is the main initiative aimed at narrowing the gap in attainment in primary schools. It is designed to complement the national literacy and numeracy strategies. The EiC programme built on the lessons learned from the earlier Education Action Zone (EAZ) programme by narrowing the focus of the initiative and concentrating on defined areas of need. The learning mentor strand deals with social exclusion; the gifted and talented strand targets underachievement; and primary learning support units support pupils with behavioural problems.

4. Ofsted's report, *Improving City Schools* (2000), surveyed a sample of schools in disadvantaged areas whose performance was better than that of schools in similar circumstances. The schools' success was attributed to very good leadership and management; good teaching; clear, rigorous and consistent systems, and positive links with parents and the community. However, despite their success, when placed in the context of all schools in disadvantaged areas, the report found that many schools were not thriving and further action was required.

5. This finding was mirrored in *Access and achievement: ten years on*, a speech made by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to the Fabian Society in November 2003. He drew attention to the fact that, despite the introduction of educational programmes designed to raise overall achievement, many schools continue to struggle.

6. Ofsted's report, *Excellence in Cities and Education Action Zones: management and impact* (2003), evaluated the initial impact of the primary extension. This evaluation was based on visits to schools carried out in 2001/02. Ofsted reported that the EiC primary extension is 'a young experiment but is already having an effect,' and 'overall, the early indications are positive.'

7. This report picks up the story. It evaluates the overall impact of the Primary Extension of EiC and assesses whether the early promise has been realised. The EiC policy document states that the programme, 'above all, starts with the needs of the

individual pupil and the challenges they face.' This report therefore focuses particularly on the impact of the Primary Extension on individual pupils.

8. Ofsted, through Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI), visited 28 EiC primary schools over an 18-month period between spring 2003 and summer 2004. The schools represented the range of schools in the primary extension (see Annex A).

9. HMI made two visits to each school with a two-term gap between the first and the second visit. Five themes were evaluated: leadership and management; teaching and learning; transfer and transition; behaviour; and multi-agency working. Pupils' views were a major focus: approximately 90 pupils were interviewed and, in most cases, also their parents or carers (the names used in the case studies are not their real ones). Meetings were held with teachers, co-ordinators and personnel from LEAs and other agencies. HMI observed lessons, mainly English and mathematics, and scrutinised planning, pupils' records and school documentation.

10. Annexes to this report contain analyses of the performance data for all 1,104 primary schools that receive EiC funding compared with all schools nationally.

Main findings

- The Excellence in Cities Primary Extension is beginning to realise its potential. The programme is more firmly established and is beginning to have a positive impact on educational attainment in schools. It has made a valuable contribution to social inclusion. The majority of schools have raised their expectations of pupils and broadened the range of experiences available for them. However, there is still much to do if the programme's ambitions are to be fulfilled.

- The percentage of pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 attaining level 4 or above in English, mathematics and science improved at a higher rate in schools involved in the EiC programme than in schools nationally. However, the improvement in the percentage of pupils gaining level 5 has broadly followed the national trend.

- Attendance rates have improved in EiC primary schools. Although the attendance rate is below the national average, since 1998 improvement has been five times the rate for all schools nationally.

- The programme has benefited individual pupils, much of this through the work of the learning mentors. Schools have increased their awareness of the barriers that pupils face and have developed appropriate intervention strategies.

- Over half the schools improved their management of the programme between the first and the second visits. However, some significant areas of weakness remain. Although target-setting improved, its quality is still too variable. The quality of monitoring and evaluation was unsatisfactory in just over a third of the schools.

- The most effective schools made the initiative central to their work, integrating it into their school improvement planning.
- A small number of schools believed that the gifted and talented strand of the programme was not conducive to promoting equal opportunities. Such schools diluted the allocated resources by spending them on generic enrichment activities rather than on raising the attainment of higher-attaining and underachieving pupils.
- EiC partnerships did not always provide the necessary direction and support for schools to implement the initiative effectively.
- Partnerships with parents and links with the community improved. Learning mentors contributed to positive links with other agencies. The parents of pupils supported by learning mentors valued their input and developed more positive attitudes to the school's work. The behaviour and attendance of individual pupils improved.
- Learning mentors played an important role in improving pupils' attitudes to the transfer to secondary school and vulnerable pupils have been supported well. Little headway has been made in developing curriculum continuity and progression.

Points for action

The **DfES** should take further steps to:

- improve schools' leadership and management of the EiC programme as an integral part of school improvement
- provide guidance on how to integrate EiC programmes successfully with the Primary National Strategy
- improve transition between Key Stages 2 and 3.

LEAs and partnerships should take further steps to:

- develop the skills of headteachers and other managers in setting challenging and relevant targets which focus on improving attainment
- focus attention on the schools where leadership and management of the programme are weak
- ensure planning for improving pupils' behaviour and attendance directly supports improvements in attainment
- improve transfer from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3 to ensure continuity in the curriculum and progression in pupils' learning

- improve the monitoring of EiCs to ensure that underachievement is tackled directly
- ensure that the programme's strand for gifted and talented pupils is used for its intended purpose and that its impact on pupils' attainment is measured securely
- provide opportunities to disseminate good practice.

Schools should take further steps to:

- improve target-setting to ensure appropriate challenge for pupils, particularly for those who are underachieving
- ensure the principles that underpin the gifted and talented strand are understood fully and embedded in the work of the school
- work with other schools to share good practice, particularly with secondary schools to ensure that curriculum content and the quality of teaching challenge and support pupils transferring from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3.

Background

11. EiC is a central part of the government's strategy for raising educational standards and promoting social inclusion in major cities and those areas which, although not in an urban context, face similar problems. As Table 1 indicates, the level of disadvantage in schools in such areas (EiC schools) is much higher than the national average.

Table 1. Characteristics of EiC schools compared with schools nationally.

Primary schools – averages	EiC schools	National
% of free school meals	38.3	17.9
% of pupils with statements of special educational need	1.7	1.6
% of pupils with special educational needs (SEN)	20.4	17.5
% of pupils from minority ethnic groups	46.7	17.8

12. EiC was launched in 1999 as a three-year programme involving 25 local education authorities (LEAs) and 438 secondary schools; two further phases were introduced and 57 LEAs are now involved in the programme. In September 2000, it was extended, as a pilot, to 1,104 primary schools. A further expansion of the

programme has been announced from September 2004. Funding has been allocated to all EiC Phase 2 and 3 authorities plus 74 LEAs outside the EiC secondary programme. Allocations have been made to LEAs according to the number of pupils in schools where, on average, over 35% of pupils were eligible for free school meals between 2001 and 2003. In total, 1,159 primary schools matched this criterion.

13. The primary extension is similar to the secondary model and is underpinned by the same four core values:

- high expectations of every pupil and all young people
- diversity of provision
- networks of schools
- extension of opportunity to bring success to every school.

14. There are three main strands to the primary extension: the learning mentor strand; the gifted and talented strand; and the primary learning support unit strand (PLSU). It is intended that these strands, combined, will create an effect which is greater than the sum of the individual programmes.

15. In addition, the programme aims to tackle transition at all stages, and particularly to tackle the dip in attainment that happens typically when pupils move from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3.

Impact of the EiC strands

Leadership and management

16. The EiC programme helped all but four of the schools inspected to create greater purpose and vision based on high expectations for all. In the most effective schools, it enabled staff to raise pupils' self-esteem and there was a strong commitment to helping pupils escape from a cycle of poverty.

17. Over three quarters of the schools had a good understanding of their pupils' backgrounds and were aware of their diverse needs and the barriers to learning they faced.

18. In contrast, the programme had insufficient impact on raising expectations in a seventh of schools. In these schools, some staff were reluctant to accept that higher academic standards were achievable. The additional focus on higher-attaining pupils was perceived as inequitable and, in a minority of schools, there was a pervasive culture of blame. In these schools, the headteachers attributed low standards and challenging behaviour exclusively to the pupils' home circumstances. In one school where there were low expectations, the headteacher suggested that the high level of deprivation was the main reason for the pupils' poor attainment in national tests at

age 7 and for their unsatisfactory progress between ages 7 and 11. The headteacher continued:

> *The gifted and talented initiative is divisive and, at this stage in my career, I don't feel threatened by league tables and targets. I am concentrating on the whole child.*

19. Schools that believed that the provision for gifted and talented pupils was inequitable diluted the allocated resources by ensuring that they were spent on generic enrichment activities rather than focusing on raising the attainment of higher-attaining and underachieving pupils.

20. Three quarters of schools expressed reasonable levels of confidence in pursuing the aims of the EiC initiative, but a quarter of the schools did not have a systematic approach to using EiC resources. In a quarter of the schools, the EiC strands were not part of the overall planning for improvement and it was not clear how the strands would be used to raise standards. Where schools had planned the use of EiC resources, their purpose was clear, strategies for improvement had been established and staff felt part of the overall initiative.

21. Just under half the schools were not managing the initiative effectively during the first visit by HMI. In too many instances, there was no formal monitoring of the full range of EiC initiatives; where monitoring took place, too often it lacked focus and rigour. There were many instances of support not being focused clearly enough on the identified groups and individual pupils. The programme's strands were not embedded fully in the school's work. This improved markedly between the first and second visit when the management of the initiative was unsatisfactory in only one in eight of the schools.

> *Case study*
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> *At the time of the first visit by HMI in May 2003, the headteacher was in her first term at the school. She had a clear vision of how the learning mentor and gifted and talented strands would be promoted in the school. Before her appointment, the funding for the initiatives had not been clearly targeted and neither strand had had any impact on the work of the school. The headteacher said: 'As soon as we can, we want the best possible provision for all. We will ensure that the financial package is spent where it is supposed to be. This has not been so in the past.' The school based its improvement planning on the areas identified during the inspection visit. In the seven months since the first visit, both strands were developed successfully. Regular contact with the EiC partnership was established; the headteacher ensured that the learning mentor and the gifted and talented co-ordinator received consistent contact and support from the relevant partnership co-ordinators. She promoted meetings in school and monitored the development of both strands very closely.*

The partnership asked the school's gifted and talented co-ordinator to become the strand link co-ordinator for 12 schools as she was now a very good practitioner. The headteacher had high expectations for and of staff and pupils. She was ably supported by an efficient and enthusiastic deputy headteacher and they made an effective senior management team. Through redundancy and restructuring, they eradicated weak teaching and removed staff with low expectations. A curriculum monitoring policy was established. Each term, teachers' lessons were observed by either the headteacher or deputy headteacher, alongside an analysis of pupils' workbooks. Specific teaching for higher attaining pupils was well established.

22. Over half of the schools visited during the first round did not measure the impact of the initiative on pupils' progress satisfactorily. Many schools had made progress in this important area by the time of the second visit. Almost three quarters of schools used results from optional and national tests to measure the impact of the initiative on pupils' progress.

23. In a tenth of schools, support was not targeted sufficiently on identified groups of pupils.

The acting headteacher of one school had taught in the school for many years and expressed concerns about poor standards, but had very little idea about how to improve them. The school included a high percentage of pupils from Black Caribbean backgrounds. These pupils were proportionally more likely to be excluded or referred to the primary learning support unit. The learning mentor had been working with these pupils in an unstructured way, describing his work as 'hanging out' with the pupils in the playground, in 'their own space'. The many unsatisfactory elements of this provision included a lack of a policy or action plan for the work of the learning mentor, although the recently written special educational needs action plan referred to some aspects of the learning mentor's role. The newly appointed special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO) became the learning mentor's line manager and weekly meetings were introduced. Neither the school's senior managers nor local EiC partnership monitored the work of the learning mentor. There were no formal strategies for meeting individual pupils' specific needs, for example, through anger management training, bereavement counselling, conflict resolution or problem solving. There was no system for target-setting or for monitoring and evaluating pupils' progress.

24. Partnership with parents was good in three quarters of the schools. There was a wide range of approaches to promote effective partnership between home and school. For example, in one school frequent meetings were held and there are classes for parents. Focus groups and the use of questionnaires for parents identified concerns effectively.

25. Improved links between the school and their communities were a further positive feature. Much of this work was put in place by learning mentors. Improvements included links with religious communities which helped pupils to broaden their understanding of different faiths. Work with local businesses and charities increased.

26. Leadership and management of the programme were most effective when the different strands of the initiative were integrated fully into the work of the school to enable it to meet its aims. These schools looked carefully at their aims to ensure they reflected the principles of the initiative; connected the strands to existing systems and procedures; were creative in developing the programme; and used it to further links with parents and the wider community.

Soho Parish School

The management of the initiative at Soho Parish School was very good. There was a clear vision for the gifted and talented strand and the school stated its intention to strike a balance between enrichment and enhancement for all pupils. The strategy to achieve this aimed to provide very good teaching for all pupils. Actions taken included the following:

Enhancement activities

- *The mathematics co-ordinator attended a mathematics course on differentiation and a focus on the most able pupils. The school's performance management focused on mathematics with particular reference to improving differentiation and raising attainment.*

- *The school looked in detail at how the quality of teachers' questioning could develop pupils' thinking skills.*

- *The school organised a 'scientist in residence' week. A scientist from South London Science and Technology Centre organised a week of fun and challenging practical science activities for the whole school.*

- *A 'technologist in residence' week was held. A technologist from South London Science and Technology Centre ran a series of technology workshops for the whole school. Foundation Stage children and pupils in Years 1 and 2 designed elastic band scutlers (a spinning device, when propelled by elastic bands or similar, move across a table) and pupils in Years 3 to 6 designed pneumatic monsters (children learned how using a pneumatic pump, consisting of a bottle, balloon and tubing can make the monsters move) and pop-up cards.*

- *These 'in residence' activities were complemented by training sessions for staff to consider strategies for continuing the work begun in the workshops.*

- *The headteacher ran an extension mathematics class for higher-attaining pupils.*

- *Years 5 and 6 pupils were given the opportunity to take part in a series of six workshops about the portrayal of families in the media. This analysed programmes and compared real and fictional family life. Years 3 and 4 pupils participated in a series of workshops based on the use of brain gym (physical activity designed to enhance learning and performance), questioning skills, object handling and games.*

- *The teacher with responsibility for the gifted and talented strand received a DfES 'Best Practice' research scholarship. This resulted in DfES funding for research in raising the performance of underachieving boys and how art and thinking skills could be used as a tool for inclusion.*

- *Pupils attended a writing workshop with Soho Theatre. A pupil with SEN was one of those chosen to have his play performed at the theatre.*

Enrichment activities

- *The inclusion strategy was the focus for enrichment activities. The school offered a wide range of enrichment activities to as many pupils as possible. The intention was to identify pupils with a particular talent from these 'taster' sessions and to tailor provision to meet their needs.*

- *Pupils in Years 1 and 2 worked with the Young Shakespeare Company. By the end of Year 2, pupils would have seen three plays at the theatre and taken part in drama workshops based on them.*

- *An artist worked on the Soho Journeys Project, which involved exploring patterns in Soho. These were related to how children travelled to school and how the rich ethnic mix of Soho was encapsulated in the school's population. The outcomes of this work were to be displayed on banners in Soho Green.*

- *Year 4 pupils attended puppet-making workshops at the Theatre Museum.*

- *Pupils in Years 5 and 6 were involved in music and dance workshops with the Orchestra for the Age of Enlightenment.*

Pupils learned how to dance to Baroque music. Contemporary dance workshops were also organised.

- *A freelance information and communication technology (ICT) consultant made digital films with Year 6 pupils, focusing on storyboarding and editing films.*

- *Thinking skills workshops were organised for pupils in Years 3 to 6.*

- *Pupils in Year 4 developed advanced computing skills. Computer experts worked with pupils on the Fathom project, which involved them creating a virtual world under the sea.*

- *A pottery club was organised by the learning mentor and also attended by the co-ordinator for gifted and talented pupils.*

27. The school's sense of purpose enabled activities to be planned to help it to achieve its aims. Its work was characterised by:

- teachers' high expectations and pupils who understood that they were expected to do their best

- very good or excellent teaching. Teachers' planning clearly outlined appropriate teaching strategies for pupils of all abilities, including those who were gifted and talented

- cohesive school development which integrated special programmes into the planning for school improvement

- knowledgeable teachers who discussed educational theory and applied it intelligently and judiciously to their work

- a willingness to think creatively about the best ways to structure the curriculum. As a result, it was enjoyable, challenging and provided learning opportunities of high quality.

28. The work of the learning mentor built on the priorities the school had identified: namely, developing more effective strategies for inclusion and improving the school's links with parents and the community. The learning mentor's planning for this was thorough and integrated fully into the work of the school. The school supported the learning mentor, who was previously a school clerical officer and then a teaching assistant, to gain a degree in psychology. More recently, she undertook a qualification in family therapy. This school's flexibility meant that it gained a highly qualified and committed learning mentor who made a significant contribution to inclusion and who was able to work effectively, both independently and as a member of the school team.

Teaching and learning

29. In almost all of the schools in the sample, the overall impact of the EiC provision on teaching and learning was at least satisfactory. In over a quarter of schools, the impact was good. In these schools, the initiative raised teachers' expectations of pupils' performance, especially that of gifted and talented pupils. Focused work with vulnerable pupils improved their attitudes, behaviour and capacity to learn.

30. In over one third of schools, however, rigorous target-setting and close monitoring of attainment were underdeveloped.

31. Schools identified four groups of pupils with major barriers to their learning. The work of the learning mentors and the gifted and talented programme focused on:

- pupils who were disaffected or underachieving because of a lack of motivation, emotional or behavioural difficulties, or low self-esteem
- pupils whose learning was affected adversely by outside influences
- pupils who lacked social and organisational skills
- pupils who needed support to acquire basic skills.

32. Increasingly, teachers identified the needs of specific pupils in their planning, most often for English and mathematics but sometimes for the development of their thinking skills. They took account of school, class and individual targets and, as a result, the work set was suitably challenging and matched appropriately to pupils' needs. The planning by learning mentors for pupils with emotional and behavioural needs was good. The plans showed a wide range of activities which were specific and sensitive to individual pupils' needs. The work was particularly effective when it was integrated into the class teacher's planning and where the teacher and learning mentor worked in partnership.

33. Although schools recognised that target-setting was a key factor in tackling underachievement, practice varied considerably. Target-setting tended to be good in schools where there was a strong emphasis on school improvement and raising standards; it was underpinned by leadership and management that reflected a vision that all pupils should achieve their potential. Targets were specific and provided clear benchmarks against which pupils' progress could be assessed. The most effective targets referred to all those involved in teaching and learning: pupils, teachers, support staff and parents. All were aware of what they were trying to achieve and their roles in this. Almost all the schools set targets for improving pupils' attitudes and behaviour. However, there was not always a sufficient link between these and the impact they were to have on attainment. The focus on immediate issues such as behaviour led to a failure to appreciate the relationship between tackling barriers to learning and improving attainment.

34. Effective monitoring of teaching and learning underpinned the clear identification of specific areas for development and strategies for improvement. Where these were in place, roles and responsibilities were understood and contributed to a cohesive approach to high standards. In the most effective schools, subject co-ordinators monitored planning, pupils' work and lessons, focusing on matching work to pupils' needs, the level of challenge and support linked to the pupils' achievements. Headteachers were involved in monitoring the quality of teaching and, with key staff, collecting and analysing data to track pupils' progress.

35. In just over a third of schools, there were weaknesses in the monitoring of the impact of the initiative on teaching and learning, especially the effect of improved attitudes and behaviour on pupils' attainment. Systems to track and monitor the progress of targeted pupils were poor and hampered schools' capacity to determine the impact of different levels of support. Headteachers did not monitor lessons regularly to gauge the quality of the provision and the pupils' progress, especially in relation to the work of the learning mentor. General monitoring through informal meetings between the headteacher and learning mentor were focused insufficiently on evaluating the strategies used and the pupils' progress towards meeting their targets.

36. The training resulting from the initiative for teachers and non-teaching staff was generally well received, although some schools felt a need for further co-ordination and direction from the local EiC partnership. Training typically included: developing problem-solving; thinking skills; accelerated learning strategies; working in partnership with parents; and monitoring the development of pupils' self-esteem. As a result of the training, learning mentors became increasingly effective.

37. Learning mentors valued the support provided by the local EiC partnership meetings which provided a forum to share good practice and, as a result, helped them to develop their professional skills.

38. In many cases, schools established partnerships with other institutions to extend and enrich the curriculum. Specialist teaching in subjects such as mathematics, art and design, ICT, and music helped to enhance pupils' skills.

39. Learning mentors also established close working relationships with educational welfare officers, educational psychologists, family support workers, social services and the police. This enabled greater co-ordination of support and a wider shared knowledge and understanding of individual pupils' needs. Learning mentors also extended links with parents by involving them in their children's learning, keeping them informed of targets and of their child's progress.

Case study

Joseph's mother was very pleased with the work of the learning mentor. She thought that communication between home and school had improved after her initial concerns that she was not being kept sufficiently informed. She could not compliment the learning mentor enough on the way she had worked with Joseph and helped him.

Joseph was also aware that he had improved. He was proud of his success with school work: he knew that he was working in the top groups in English and mathematics in his class. His teacher reported that he was making good progress directly as a result of the learning mentor's additional support. He did not worry as much now and said: 'Since I have been talking to my learning mentor most of my worries have gone. Now I talk to my mum as well. I don't think so much and the boys have stopped making fun of me.'

Transfer and transition

40. Support for vulnerable pupils transferring from primary to secondary schools was generally good. However, the initiative had little impact on ensuring continuity in the curriculum and progression in teaching and learning between primary and secondary schools. Consequently, the general dip in pupils' attainment on transfer from primary to secondary school remains.

41. Learning mentors in most schools focused primarily on pupils who they felt to be at greater risk of failing to settle at their new school. These pupils often included those with behavioural difficulties or SEN. The systems which schools established to support the transition of vulnerable pupils were informal but, nonetheless, generally effective.

Case study

Sohail was due to start secondary school in 2002. There were significant concerns that Sohail, who was extremely vulnerable, would not cope with the demands of a large secondary school. The primary school requested that he be placed in a special school but this was refused by the LEA. The learning mentor, with the help of a Bengali interpreter, consulted Sohail's mother and the receiving secondary school to agree a plan of action. The learning mentor met the head of SEN and identified a member of staff at the new school who would provide specific support for Sohail. They also established how Sohail would make contact with the support teacher should difficulties arise. The learning mentor attended the secondary school with Sohail twice before he started there to demonstrate travelling to and from school, show him how to handle money and the geography of the building.

Later contact with the secondary school showed that Sohail was settled and attending school regularly.

42. Very few schools set specific targets for pupils at the point of transfer unless they formed part of individual education plans for pupils with SEN. One school set targets for academic performance at the end of Year 7 and included these on the pupils' transfer records. One school devised transfer plans for pupils at risk of not settling at secondary school.

43. Overall, planning for transfer was at least satisfactory in four fifths of the schools. Well-organised and coherent transfer comprised a planned programme that involved staff from the primary and secondary schools. Informal planning for transfer, however, resulted occasionally in a series of unconnected activities or events which lacked overall coherence. In one case, efforts made by a primary school learning mentor to ensure effective transfer were frustrated by the secondary school's failure to engage energetically with them. In another case, an EAZ had developed a number of systems to promote transfer, but the secondary school had not sustained them.

44. In a very small number of schools, cross-phase teaching provided stimulating opportunities for gifted and talented pupils. Some schools organised specific activities for them: for example, pupils applying for scholarship places in independent schools, received support with interviewing techniques. One school offered guitar tuition for pupils who were then supported on transfer to Year 7. In one instance, attendance at weekend master classes increased a pupil's self-confidence and he succeeded in gaining a scholarship to a selective school. Overall, however, planned activities for gifted and talented pupils on transfer to secondary school were not well developed.

Tranmere Park Primary School

Poppy was in Year 6 with a twin sister in the same class. Poppy had always done well at school and attained good standards, but had tended to become rather complacent, possibly finding that her tasks lacked challenge. As a result, her interest had waned. The school identified some Year 6 pupils as higher attainers in mathematics. Poppy was one of the three highest attainers and might be considered to be gifted in this subject.

Provision continued in the normal class situation with the teacher providing differentiated work for the group. Links with the local high school were developed and a project was started to support these pupils' higher mathematical skills. The project involved a secondary teacher working with the group each Tuesday with the aim of extending the provision for more able pupils. The secondary school was a technology college for mathematics and ICT and the link also aimed to develop the ICT skills of all Year 6 pupils.

Poppy found the work in the Tuesday sessions challenging and interesting. Her teacher and the secondary teacher decided to incorporate the Year 7 curriculum requirements into the work planned for the group. Poppy rose to the challenge and found the work stimulating. She was highly motivated and made very good progress since the project started. The teacher was aware that the standard Poppy was achieving had improved markedly and she was assessed at Level 5A in mathematics. Her parents were very pleased with the progress she was making.

45. The monitoring of transition activities was weak in almost a third of schools. No schools had clear procedures for monitoring the quality of transition activities and very few had information on the impact of such activities on pupils' progress and attainment in the secondary school. Evaluation was better, however, where there were closer links between the primary and secondary schools. For example, two schools requested information on pupils' progress in Years 7 to 9 from each of the secondary schools to which its pupils transferred; they received it from the majority of schools.

46. Although most schools undertook transition activities with Year 6 pupils, the picture was variable. Less than a fifth of schools made use of transition units or encouraged pupils to attend summer schools where these were offered. Some schools invited ex-pupils (current Year 7 pupils) to talk to Year 6 pupils about secondary school. This helped Year 6 to become more confident about the transfer. In half the schools, Year 6 pupils had discussed their concerns about transferring to secondary school with staff.

47. The day-to-day management of transition activities was generally good. Learning mentors, often with SENCOs, checked that planned activities ran smoothly and that targeted pupils were supported effectively. In many schools, headteachers and deputy headteachers took a particular interest in transition. However, this seldom led to the clear identification of such activities as part of the school improvement plan. The exact role and impact of the EiC initiative in this area was often unclear, since transition was often funded from a variety of sources, such as the DfES's Standards Fund or EAZs. Very few schools had established a clearly defined role for a transition co-ordinator.

48. Some co-ordinators and learning mentors attended briefings and meetings organised by EiC partnerships where transition was discussed, but no school had planned any in-service training to support EiC transition activities.

49. Many learning mentors made good links with their counterparts in secondary schools, either through EiC network meetings or specific school-based meetings. Where the links were strong, this had usually come about through the learning mentor strand of EiC work. Schools were effective in promoting the successful transition of vulnerable pupils. Nevertheless, a fifth of schools reported difficulty in making links with their partner secondary schools. A number of headteachers were concerned that some pupils who had been supported by a learning mentor would not receive such support following their transfer. This was sometimes exacerbated by the very large number of schools to which their Year 6 pupils transferred. Liaison with partner secondary schools for pupils who were gifted or talented was very weak. One learning mentor commented:

> *The links between us and the high school are not well established. They receive money for transition but we are not involved. They pay little attention to our academic records.*

50. In one school, an EiC partnership and the Ethnic Minority Achievement Service worked collaboratively to pilot a project focusing on pupils for whom English was a

second language, who were also in danger of being excluded. Learning mentors supported and improved the behaviour, attitudes and attendance of the targeted pupils.

51. Learning mentors generally made good links with the parents of targeted pupils during transition.

Childeric Primary School

The learning mentor helped parents and pupils by providing advice and arranging support and interpreters for parents with English as an additional language. She met other primary and secondary learning mentors to discuss all pupils who were being mentored. She liaised regularly with the LEA admissions team, particularly on behalf of pupils who were yet to be offered a secondary school place.

Croxteth Community School

Learning mentor liaison between the primary and receiving school was well developed. Regular meetings took place between the learning mentors prior to transfer, and pupils supported by the learning mentor met and worked with the high school learning mentor during the weeks leading to transfer. Detailed records were kept on those being supported and these were shared with the receiving school mentor. As pupils prepared for transfer, the learning mentor took them and their parents to visit the high school.

During the first half term after transfer, the primary school's learning mentor spent some time working at the high school with the pupils who had recently been transferred. As the pupils settled and gained confidence, the time was reduced. However, links were maintained between the primary and secondary learning mentors and regular feedback was received on pupils' progress. Consequently, most vulnerable pupils receiving learning mentor support in the primary school settled on transfer and continued to learn without misbehaviour or disaffection resurfacing. In their last two years at the school, very few pupils involved in the project had experienced problems during the first year after transfer.

Behaviour

52. All the schools made progress in improving behaviour and preventing exclusions as a result of participating in the EiC programme. Learning mentors contributed significantly to these improvements by providing additional support to pupils with emotional difficulties, particularly those with disruptive or aggressive behaviour and low self-esteem. The EiC initiative prompted schools to review and improve how they managed pupils' behaviour. The majority of schools developed intervention strategies to help pupils to overcome poor behaviour. As part of this work, schools developed good partnerships with parents and other agencies.

Millbank School

As part of the EiC initiative the school made several changes in its approach to behaviour management:

- *The behaviour policy was revised; sanctions and rewards were reviewed continually to maintain children's interest.*
- *As part of a survey of professional development, the school identified teachers with good skills in behaviour management; new staff observed them working as part of their introduction to the school's policy.*
- *A weekly child–parent group was set up, following from the school's work with the Marlborough Centre. This was very effective in supporting children and their parents jointly. For example a boy with behavioural difficulties attended the group session with his mother who had mental health problems. The sessions helped them to develop strategies and solutions for coping with their problems.*
- *As part of a new initiative, the school focused on pupils with behavioural problems for after-school and lunchtime clubs. These attracted a number of 'high-profile' boys and engaged them in creative activities.*
- *Pupils' behaviour was generally very good and the lunchtime playground system devised by the learning mentor had a very positive impact. The number of referrals at lunchtime dropped dramatically.*

53. The learning mentor in one school coached pupils in strategies to help their peers resolve difficulties in the playground.

Barrow Hill Junior School

A number of Year 6 pupils were elected by other pupils to train as playground peer mentors. The learning mentor provided six training sessions for the peer mentors before morning school, using role play to develop their understanding of mediation and conflict resolution. Before beginning their work in the playground, the peer mentors visited each class in the school to describe their role. The peer mentors called themselves 'Worry Wipers' and had duty days in the playground when they were available to help pupils who approached them. One peer mentor said:

'…it's a very rewarding job when you sort something out and people thank you'.

Pupils were learning to help others whilst developing their own skills in managing relationships. They understood the boundaries of their

work and knew when they should refer something to an adult. When asked if their mentoring made a difference, one replied:

'We've really been able to help "grumpy" children find friends.'

54. Three quarters of schools had effective systems to identify pupils most in need and set specific targets for improving their behaviour, although few schools evaluated the impact of such work on pupils' attainment.

55. In the best cases, targets were challenging, linked to the school's behaviour management scheme and progress was reviewed in weekly meetings between the learning mentor and individual pupils. Parents were involved in the review and were kept in touch with their child's progress. Learning mentors took joint responsibility for individual learning plans with the SENCO and successfully involved teachers and other support agencies.

Childeric Primary School

As part of the EiC initiatives, the school developed very effective behaviour management procedures with clear and detailed guidance. This led to a significant decrease in incidents of undesirable behaviour and it increased the confidence of staff in resolving conflict. Support staff were involved at all levels of planning and all staff took responsibility to support targeted pupils. Learning mentors and class teachers kept behaviour improvement records based on behaviour improvement plans, which included targets and strategies. The headteacher monitored these to maintain an overview of pupils' progress and to ensure that resources were allocated appropriately. Although behaviour was still a concern for the school, it had improved significantly.

56. In the great majority of the schools, learning mentors played a key role in managing behaviour. They managed multi-agency work to support pupils and, in many cases, were instrumental in introducing reviews of policy and new initiatives for improving the management of behaviour. In the schools where behaviour had improved the most, headteachers had played a leading role in ensuring a well co-ordinated approach to managing intervention strategies. This was particularly evident in schools involved in the behaviour improvement project (BIP).

Case study

Grace grew up and began her education in Jamaica. Her father had moved to England two years previously and had remarried. while Grace remained in Jamaica with her grandmother. Recently, her father had sent for Grace to join his new family which included three stepsons who attended Millbank School. Grace was therefore faced with many changes.

Although Grace enjoyed school, she had difficulty in communicating and getting on with her peers. She did not find it easy to think about other people's feelings or points of view and was emotionally quite immature. She had a tendency to seek attention and got into

arguments and fights with other children, especially in the playground. At times, she was disruptive in the classroom and needed to be kept on task. Group work could be difficult for her.

Grace needed to improve her social skills and behaviour in the classroom. The learning mentor supported her effectively, resulting in more appropriate behaviour in the classroom.

Her teacher felt that Grace had become much more motivated and enthusiastic about her learning and was now really keen to learn. Her ability to work with others had improved significantly and she was now more willing to listen to others, share ideas and take turns. She had become much less dominant and disruptive in group situations and far fewer negative incidents occurred.

Her development of good friendships within the class was a major change for Grace. Her teacher started to use her as a good role model for other children. Such praise and recognition of her progress resulted in her increasing her efforts to improve. Her teacher was impressed with her progress, both academically and pastorally.

57. Staff in fewer than half the schools benefited from specific additional training on behaviour management. However, as a result of the broad range of professional development opportunities, the learning mentors gained professional self-confidence and some introduced innovative ideas on managing behaviour in their schools. One LEA supported an overseas training visit for a group of learning mentors. This led to the introduction of a new behaviour management scheme in their schools. The new system was effective in developing pupils' sense of responsibility and good self-management skills.

58. Three quarters of the schools in the programme improved their links with the parents of vulnerable pupils and succeeded in involving them in their children's education. This was particularly the case for the parents of children with challenging and often disruptive behaviour. All the parents who were interviewed spoke highly of the support they and their children had received from the school generally and the learning mentor in particular. These close working relationships between the parents and the school had a positive impact on pupils' attitudes to school.

59. Well over two thirds of the schools had effective systems for monitoring the impact of interventions on individual pupils' behaviour. However, evaluating the impact of policy changes and initiatives on school improvement and behaviour across the school was a weakness. Much of the evidence was anecdotal and did not specify the effects of improved behaviour and attitudes on attainment. Where evidence was available, it was part of a broader overall approach to self-evaluation rather than related specifically to the school's involvement in the EiC programme.

Multi-agency working

60. Schools worked with many different agencies: educational psychologists, behaviour support teams, specialist dyslexia teachers, speech and language therapists, occupational health workers, consultant paediatricians, children's mental health specialists, drugs awareness teams, family therapy centres, court welfare officers, the police service, fire brigades, other schools, colleges and universities, and local businesses. Schools with different agencies created a broad support network to help them to meet pupils' individual needs. Senior managers, SENCOs and learning mentors played a key role in developing links with other agencies. Effective multi-agency work contributed significantly to extending the range of opportunities and support available for pupils and their families. As a result, pupils felt valued and made better progress.

> *St Vincent de Paul School*
>
> *The learning mentor organised around 30 volunteers from various public and private organisations such as the Home Office and Barclays Bank to work with pupils who did not receive regular support with reading at home. Male volunteers were used specifically to provide role models for boys who were reluctant to read. The learning mentor matched volunteers with targeted pupils. For example, a volunteer with mild Asperger's syndrome worked with a child who also had a form of Asperger's. The school reported that this worked very well as the adult could discuss common challenges and how to overcome them.*

61. Target-setting varied in quality. Targets were generally satisfactory but, as with behavioural targets, they focused mainly on pupils' pastoral needs and were not structured sufficiently to improve pupils' attainment. Targets tended to focus on attendance or issues related to behaviour and attitudes to learning. The main groups of pupils identified for support were those affected by one or more of the following:

- lack of motivation or disaffection
- SEN
- emotional difficulties, disruptive or aggressive behaviour, a lack of confidence and low self-esteem
- outside influences such as social issues, family difficulties, illness, bereavement, poor attendance and punctuality
- prolonged absence.

62. Pupils made good progress when the targets were agreed with them, their parents, class teachers and, where appropriate, learning mentors and the SENCO. Effective practice included discussing strategies for meeting targets with pupils and ensuring that the support mechanisms were made explicit. In the best schools, outside agencies' contributions connected seamlessly with the school's work. Staff

worked collaboratively to ensure consistency in meeting pupils' needs and progress towards the targets was reviewed regularly.

63. Weak leadership and management led to a lack of clarity about targets and strategies. Effective monitoring was lacking, intervention was limited and the effectiveness of other professionals was taken for granted.

64. Planning for multi-agency working was broadly effective in three quarters of the schools. The majority of meetings between schools and outside agencies were planned carefully and review dates were followed up conscientiously. In one school where multi-agency planning was particularly effective, it took into account data about pupils, including attainment and teachers' assessments. Progress reviews for pupils with SEN often led to planned intervention by other agencies. Learning mentors contributed well to review meetings. They produced pupil evaluations and liaised with outside agencies before meetings. In a very good school, planning for multi-agency work was included as an objective in teachers' performance management. In this school, teachers were particularly well supported by the SENCO and the senior management team. Weaknesses in planning for multi-agency work included insufficient reference to it in school improvement plans and underdeveloped or insufficiently focused monitoring.

65. Monitoring of multi-agency work was variable. In a third of schools, where it was very good, it was characterised by strong leadership and management. It was unsatisfactory in a fifth of schools. Effective monitoring took place when the headteacher had a good understanding of what constituted value for money. In such cases, outside agencies which do not benefit pupils were not used. This ensured there were clear aims and measurable success criteria for all concerned. The most effective schools reviewed their links with outside agencies regularly.

66. Schools which managed multi-agency working effectively communicated very well; the school and the relevant agencies shared a sense of purpose. For example, in one school the management team monitored the work of the agencies using tracking sheets and discussed progress regularly with teachers, pupils and parents. However, a small number of schools still required guidance on how to work effectively with other agencies.

67. In the schools where in-service training was at least satisfactory, training took place for all staff; teachers were aware of the level of support available and developed their knowledge and expertise in areas including anger management and behaviour modification. Learning mentors, SENCOs and educational psychologists led good training on a wide range of issues, such as the role of learning mentors, child protection, behaviour management and supporting the needs of pupils who spoke English as an additional language. In-service training was unsatisfactory in one sixth of the schools. Teachers did not have sufficient knowledge and understanding about specific learning needs and did not do enough to use the range of agencies which could provide support for pupils.

68. Links with parents were good in three quarters of the schools, but were insufficient for gifted and talented pupils. The impact of such links on pupils'

progress at a pastoral level was good and often very good; the impact on attainment was variable. Links with agencies helped schools target parents who were previously reluctant to communicate with schools. As a result, such parents involved themselves with their children's education. One learning mentor commented:

> *Parents are beginning to realise the value of education and are thinking: 'Maybe it's not too late for me.' As a result of my contacts with community organisations, I can bring to their attention the learning opportunities that are available. This interest in education provides good role models for the children.*

69. Learning mentors played a key role in establishing and developing good links between parents and other agencies. They often attended meetings where parents were unfamiliar with systems, locations or personnel from other agencies. Parents found the learning mentors approachable and supportive and saw the school as a safe ally in situations where they might have felt apprehensive.

> *Case study*
>
> *Mark was referred to the learning mentor because he was underachieving in many areas of the curriculum. Although his oral contributions and comprehension indicated that he was very bright, his work was untidy, often incomplete and he had difficulty remaining focused throughout a lesson.*
>
> *The school was aware that there were significant issues in the family that could be affecting his achievements: his mother was alcohol-dependent and, after his parents separated, Mark spent part of the week with each parent. The learning mentor organised a multi-agency meeting involving the church, social services and the school. As a result of the meeting, a referral was made to a centre which provides family therapy. Mark and his father attended the centre for weekly sessions; his mother also attended.*
>
> *Mark now lives permanently with his father, although he sees his mother who is undergoing rehabilitation.*
>
> *The outcomes for Mark were positive. His work and concentration improved significantly and he began to work at the expected level in all subjects except mathematics, where his work was above the expected level. He no longer required support from the learning mentor in the classroom. His punctuality and attendance also improved and any absences were only authorised ones.*
>
> *Rushey Green School*
>
> *Charlie joined the nursery at Rushey Green in January 1996 and moved through the school into Year 6. All four of his older siblings had had problems attending. His teacher regularly referred Charlie to the education welfare officer. There was little improvement which resulted in the family being taken to court, where Mrs H received a*

warning. At this stage, Charlie's attendance was down to 49.2%. The social worker, the classteacher, the gifted and talented co-ordinator and Mrs H began to meet regularly to tackle the family's problems.

The co-ordinator for gifted and talented pupils – who was also the physical education (PE) co-ordinator – had noticed Charlie's passion for football. Through the Lewisham provision for gifted and talented children, Crystal Palace Football Club set up a session to identify talented footballers in March 2002. The co-ordinator took Charlie to the sessions and he was selected to attend a six-week club. It was agreed with the school that Charlie could attend on condition that he also attended school.

Charlie was signed by the Crystal Palace Youth Academy. He attended twice a week, supported by a group of adults from the school who provide transport.

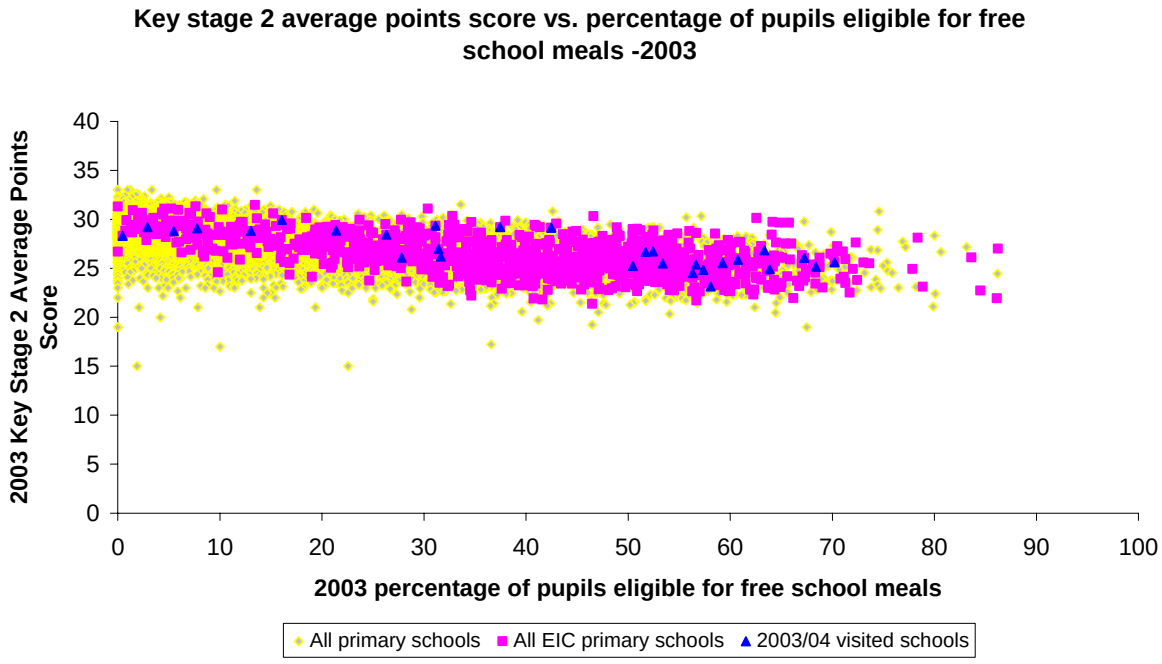
His attendance rose to 89% and his punctuality improved dramatically. He worked well with the learning mentor and began to enjoy school.

He still has a long way to go. He struggles to control his temper and is often involved in fights. He receives help with his learning, but progress is slow. However, he has recognised that that he has a chance to break out of the cycle in which he found himself and he is focused on achieving this.

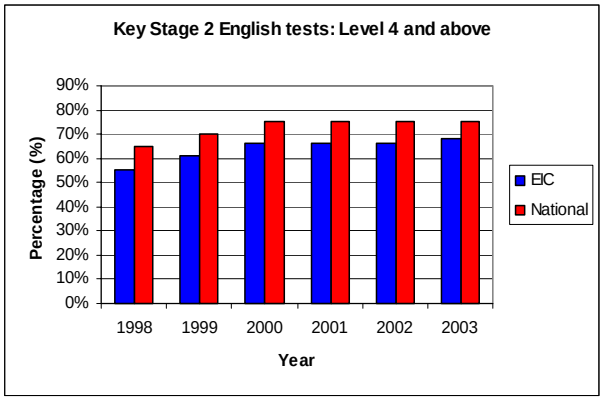
Annexes

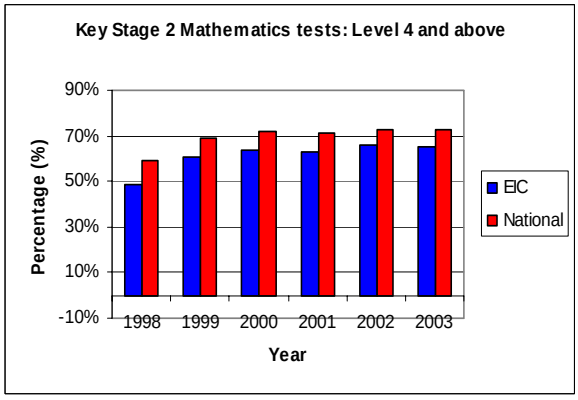
Annex A. Sample of EiC schools in survey

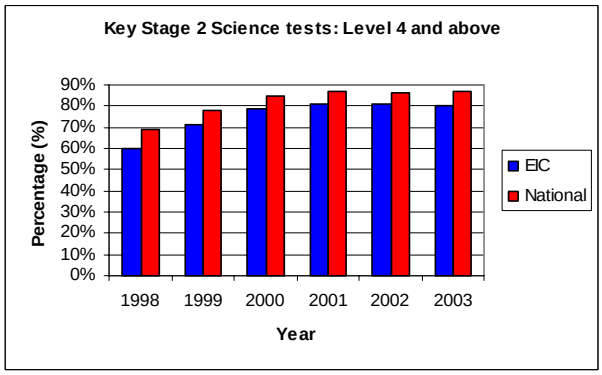
The schools visited as part of the survey represented the full range of schools in the EiC primary extension, as illustrated below.

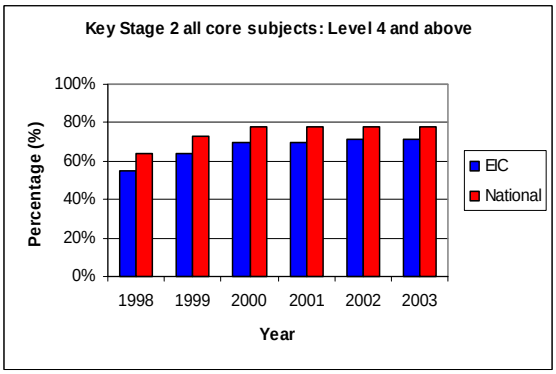


Annex B. 1998–2003 percentage of pupils at end of Key Stage 2 achieving Level 4 and above in EiC schools and nationally









Commentary

Overall, the results of the analysis of the data are encouraging and support the findings from inspection.

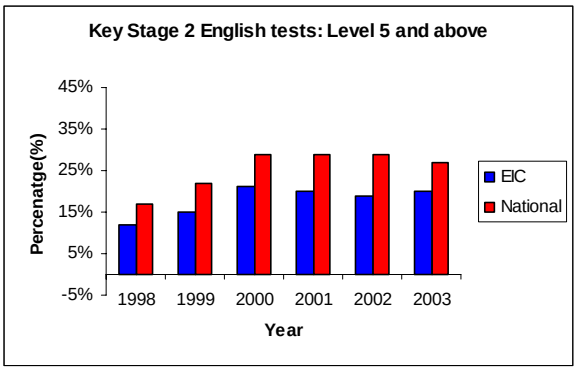
Attainment in English at the end of Key Stage 2, as measured by the national curriculum test results, improved by 2 percentage points in 2003. This is an encouraging improvement and more than that seen in schools nationally. Nationally, the proportion of pupils achieving Level 4 or above in English has remained at 75% for three consecutive years. During the period 1998–2003, all schools nationally improved the number of pupils achieving Level 4 by 10 percentage points; EiC schools improved by 13 percentage points.

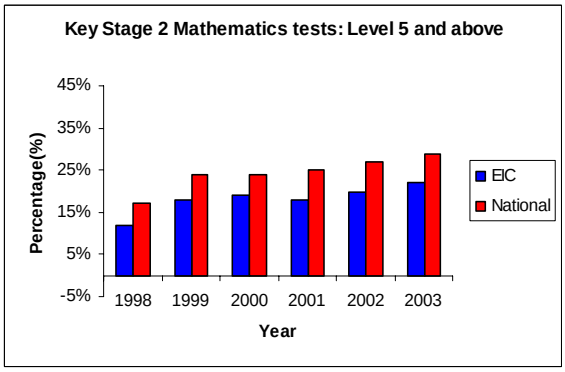
Standards of achievement in EiC schools in mathematics have broadly followed the national trend. Overall, since 1998, EiC schools improved the percentage of pupils achieving Level 4 by 16 percentage points compared with a national improvement of 14 percentage points. In 2003, the percentage of pupils achieving Level 4 in EiC schools fell by 1 percentage point while the national figure remained the same. However, in 2002, EiC schools made a gain of 3 percentage points compared with a national gain of 2 percentage points.

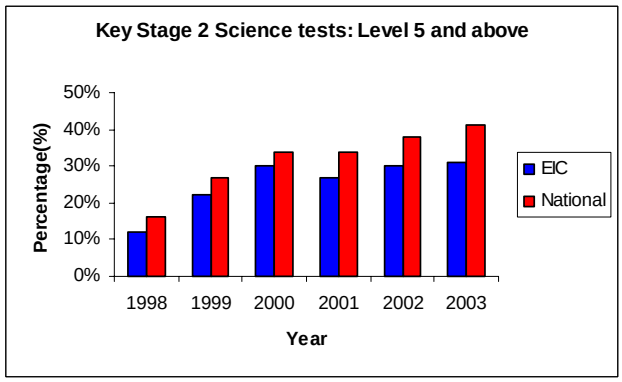
In science, the trend is again similar to the national picture. Attainment in national tests at the end of Key Stage 2 improved in EiC schools by 20 percentage points since 1998; attainment in all schools nationally improved by 18 percentage points.

Attainment in all three subjects, as measured by national tests, indicates a 16 percentage point improvement in EiC schools and a 14 percentage point improvement in all schools nationally.

Annex C. 1998–2003 percentage of pupils at end of Key Stage 2 achieving Level 5 and above in EiC schools and nationally



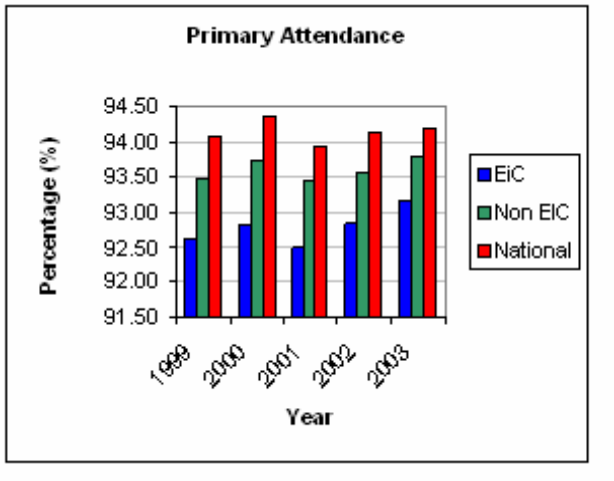




Commentary

Attainment at Level 5 has broadly followed the national trend. In English, the percentage of pupils attaining Level 5 in EiC schools is 20% compared with a national average of 27%. During the period 1998–2003, attainment in English at Level 5 showed a rise of 8 percentage points in EiC schools and a rise of 10 percentage points in all schools. In mathematics, 22% of pupils achieved Level 5 in EiC schools and 29% did so in all schools nationally. Since 1998, EiC schools have made a gain of 10 percentage points at Level 5 in mathematics compared with 12 percentage points nationally. In science, 31% of pupils in EiC schools achieved Level 5 compared with 41% nationally. In the period 1998–2003, EiC schools improved by 19 percentage points at this level compared with 25 percentage points for all schools nationally.

Annex D. Attendance percentages 1999–2003 in EiC, non-EiC schools and nationally



Commentary

The attendance rate is improving in EiC schools. Over the period 1998–2003 the attendance rate in all schools nationally improved by 0.12 of a percentage point from 94.06% to 94.18%. The improvement for EiC primary schools during the same period was 0.58 of a percentage point, from 92.60% to 93.18%. Although the attendance rate for EiC primary schools is below the national average, improvement since 1998 has been at five times the rate as that for all schools.